155. Desirability of exercising a more effective control over the management of the Shencottah—Quilon Railway.

Mr. C. Sankara Menon, B. A. & B. L. (Member, Quilon taluk) said that all that the people knew from direct source about the working of the Shencottah—Quilon Railway was that a few lakhs of rupees were being paid annually by the Government to cover the deficit in the guaranteed interest on the capital outlay on the construction of the line. The popular impression was that the line was being badly worked. The impression might perhaps be unfounded, but still the people refused to believe otherwise. What little information was available to the public was very confusing. The value of the trade by the Railway during the years 1088, 1089 and 1090 was, according to the Reports of those years, in round figures, Rs. 73 lakhs, Rs. 61 lakhs and Rs. 79 lakhs, respectively, while the share of loss during those years, was Rs. 1,19,000, Rs. 1,03,000 and Rs. 2,99,000, respectively. Even though the figure for 1089 represented only the share of loss for 9 months and that for 1090 represented the share of loss for 18 months, the disparity between the volume of trade and the share of loss would be patent. It was therefore impossible to believe that, if the value of trade increased, the share of loss would be decreased as far as that line was concerned.

Another matter for grievance for the people was that the Railway Company did not supply waggons for the transport of articles within a reasonable time of demand. The Districts of Madura, Tinnevelly and Trichinopoly were supplied with timber and tiles mainly from Travancore. Before the opening of the line, those articles were taken to Tuticorin by sea by Indian crafts and distributed from there by railway. After the introduction of the railway that laborious process was given up, depending entirely on the facilities for transport by railway. The result was that tiles were now supplied to those districts from Mangalore and Calicut, in spite of the increased freight the purchasers had to pay for the article. It was entirely due to want of facilities for transporting tiles by the Shencottah-Quilon Railway. The Member then quoted a case which had come to his personal knowledge as the vakil of the complainants. Messrs. Stephen & Co. of Quilon had an order for a very large consignment of tiles from beyond the ghats, the supply of the articles before the monsoon set in being a condition of the order. All the available capital of the Company was converted into tiles. Application was made for the supply of waggons and the tiles stocked in the Railway platform at Quilon. Months elapsed before they were able to transport the quantity. The Member, as the vakil of the Company, complained to the Government about the delay but no good came out of it. Answers to applications were not very encouraging. The Member said that he met the Deputy Traffic Superintendent in that connection, who told him that the supply of the waggons on the Travancore Section was not sufficient to meet the requirements of the line and further that it was to the advantage of the Government that the waggons were not supplied in time because, if the empties were sent over here, additional charge would have to be made. It was however not known why the empties were taken beyond the Travancore territory.

The Member also complained that, though the line was opened only ten or twelve years ago, the rolling stock used on the line was of the oldest and worst kind. Another unfortunate circumstance was that there was a ghat section. The Member did not know what action was taken on the Trade Committee's proposals for developing the trade by the line. In whatever way they might have been disposed of, effective measures had to be taken for developing the trade by the line, as otherwise, at least as far as the Government were concerned, increased deficits would have to be paid. It was also desirable to insist on the employment of Travancore subjects in the Railway service on the Travancore Section, as was insisted on in Mysore.

In conclusion, the Member requested that a competent Committee should be appointed to enquire into the working of the line, and examine the accounts sent to the Government and to submit proposals for reducing the deficit.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

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